

# A skate park for Sutton



Report prepared by G. Redman for the Sports & Recreation Working Party

Presented to Sutton Parish Council on 22/09/2015

## Introduction

At the meeting on 28/7/2015 Sutton Parish Council approved the Sports & Rec Working Party (SRWP) to proceed with a project focusing on the provision of a youth area in the village, from a proposal put forward by SRWP aimed at addressing the absence of dedicated facilities for 12-18 year-olds in the village. This lack of facilities has been highlighted in reports from East Cambs in both 2005<sup>1</sup> and again in 2013<sup>2</sup> - an entire generation of children has missed out on such provision in that time. Consequently we believe that it is matter which should be addressed with urgency.

The three key projects included in the initial proposal from SRWP were (1) creation of a skate park and meeting area, (2) provision of an all-weather pitch & (3) provision of a dedicated youth club building. This report addresses point (1).

### 1. The proposal:

To create a recreation facility primarily aimed at pre-teens, teens and young adults. Key components to include wheel play (skate, BMX and scoter) & a meeting place, also potentially to include ball play.

### 2. Background to need:

The 2011 census recorded that there were c. 350 11-18 year-olds in the village. This number can be expected to increase in the near term as demonstrated by Sutton primary school operating at above the stated annual intake cap (45/yr) for 3 out of last 5 years.

Although there are organised activities targeting this age group (Scouts, football, youth club(?)) there is no designated facility for their informal use.

East Cambs provision guidelines<sup>3</sup> (derived from NPFA standards) indicate that Sutton should have at c. 0.4ha of youth focused areas meeting following criteria:

Location: Within 25 minutes walking time of home (*i.e. within village*)

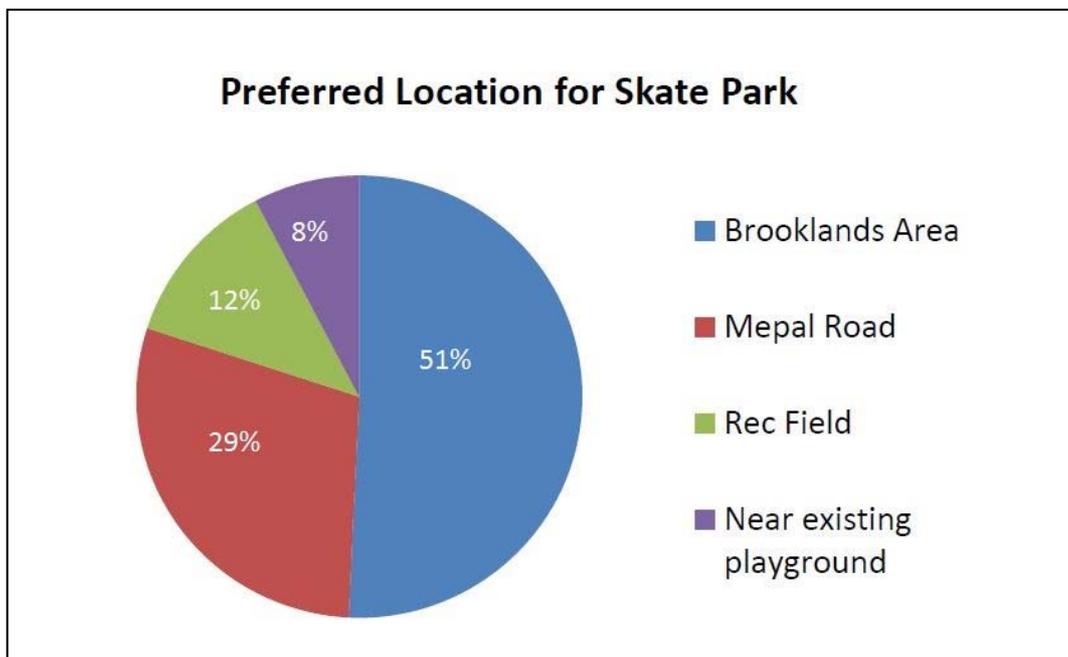
Target Users: Teenagers.

Characteristics: About 5 types of play equipment, Ball Play and Wheeled Play opportunities, and seating for accompanying adults and for teenagers to use as a Meeting Place.

Size: The essential elements (Play equipment, Ball Play, Wheeled Play, and Meeting Place opportunities) may be located at separate locations provided the total Active Zone - 0.1ha per 1,000 population. 'Nearest House' criteria: 30m from edge of Active Zone (preference is double this)

### 3. Proposed Location:

Sutton-Isle Play Project undertook a survey in August 2013 that asked residents the best location for a skate park. The results showed a clear preference (2:1) for siting a skate park at or near the Brooklands site, over next preferred site of Mepal Rd (site of existing BMX dirt track).



The Brooklands area is considered to be generally suitable because of the ease of access and the tie in with other recreation facilities around the pavilion. Essentially similar reasons to those recently cited in ascertaining the best position for the community defibrillator in the village. It has also been noted that the area is regularly used as an informal meeting place for teens.

In order to satisfy the minimum distance criteria from dwellings (35m+), whilst still keeping a skate facility close to the preferred location there were two possible sites identified; (1) currently derelict land (former airfield) adjacent to the lower football pitch, & (2) the site of current the Multi-use Games Area (MUGA). The MUGA is some 80m from the closest house and further separated by a hedge.

SIPP have been in touch with the owner of the adjacent land both directly and through local political representatives, but as yet there is no indication that the area will become available for any use until such time as the whole area might be developed. This leaves the site of the current MUGA as the most feasible available site.

As part of their remit SRWP have begun looking into the condition of the MUGA and how it can be better utilised. This preliminary review has shown that the MUGA is not being used by any of the organised groups it was meant to service<sup>4</sup> and that its principal current use is as an informal meeting place. It has also been noted that the surface of the MUGA has

deteriorated markedly, with no court markings remaining visible, undulations running across the court and areas where the tarmac surface itself is breaking up. In addition the surrounding fence has a number of areas in need of maintenance/repair (including rehanging the previously broken gates).

Given the condition of the surface, which had previously been declared as unsuitable for training use by the largest potential user, Sutton Rangers, it is clear that to make any use of the site, significant funds will need to be spent in repairs. It is the view of the working party that even were these repairs to be undertaken the MUGA will still be of very limited utility to organised groups. Even if it were to be laid with an artificial “turf” surface suitable for e.g. football and hockey the site is too small for all but very limited training. This is why as part 2 of the youth area project we will be looking at provision of an artificial pitch that covers the lower football field entirely, offering significantly better utility.

Through discussion with the Partnerships Officer at East Cambs it has been confirmed<sup>5</sup> that the terms of the s106 monies used in building the MUGA would allow for its conversion into a different facility so long as it remains sport or recreation focused.

On the basis of the foregoing, it is the recommendation of the Sports & Rec Working Party that the MUGA site be converted into skate/BMX/scooter-park with youth meeting area.

#### **4. Cost & Funding**

Indicative costs for the build of a suitable sized, durable, concrete park, with an expected usable life span of 25 years are in the range of £65k-£100k based on a number of recent local projects. For example the park captured on the cover of this report comes from a quote for Cherry Hinton parish council for c. £65k, whilst a new park has just been completed in Cottenham at a cost of £90k<sup>6</sup>.

Standard options for funding such a project would be from the Council’s balance sheet (i.e. retained reserves), through grant funding or via securing a loan through the Public Works Board (PWLB). In this particular case we believe that best approach would be the pursuit of a loan through PWLB. This is both in the interests of speed and because of the importance to “show willing” with respect to direct funding coming from the village itself for some projects when trying to get funds in for others. If the council were to use a loan as core funding for a skate park, youth shelter etc. it would mean that we will not be applying to various grant bodies multiple times, instead e.g. focusing on WREN for the play area, Sport England for an artificial pitch etc.

The low interest rates at the moment available from the Public Works Loan Board mean that the cost of interest on amounts borrowed is more or less equivalent to long term inflation targets (3%), so is a minimal cost in real terms. If the council were, e.g. to borrow £100k over 20 years, (matched to the minimum anticipated life of the asset), then the annual repayments would be £6.8k. This is similar to the amount that the council were previously paying for SADS and so could be readily covered within existing precept levels, whilst still being used in a way that is youth focused.

# PWLB

## FIXED RATE LOANS - ESTIMATED REPAYMENT COSTS

Amount of Advance: 100,000.00

Period (years)	Annuity			EIP			
	Rate (%)	½ Yearly Cost (£)	Total Cost (£)	Rate (%)	Initial ½ Yearly Costs (£)	Reduces by each ½ year (£)	Total Cost (£)
Over 4½ not over 5	1.98	10,552.55	105,525.50	1.98	10,990.00	99.00	105,445.00
Over 9½ not over 10	2.61	5,713.23	114,264.60	2.58	6,290.00	64.50	113,545.00
Over 14½ not over 15	3.03	4,172.78	125,183.40	2.99	4,828.34	49.83	123,172.50
Over 19½ not over 20	3.30	3,434.95	137,398.00	3.24	4,120.00	40.50	133,210.00
Over 24½ not over 25	3.50	3,017.40	150,870.00	3.42	3,710.00	34.20	143,605.00
Over 29½ not over 30	3.65	2,756.21	165,372.60	3.56	3,446.67	29.67	154,290.00
Over 39½ not over 40	3.81	2,445.40	195,632.00	3.75	3,125.00	23.44	175,937.50
Over 49½ not over 50	3.82	2,249.11	224,911.00	3.82	2,910.00	19.10	196,455.00

It is, therefore, the recommendation of the Sports & Rec Working Party that the Council agree a 'hard cap' budget of £100k for the creation of a skate park with youth meeting place, with the intention that the project be funded through a PWLB loan repayable from amounts previously set aside for youth group grants.

### 5. Design

It is fundamentally important that for the area to be well used it is well designed and made of the best materials. In simple terms that means poured in-situ concrete and designed by a specialist rather than a generalist play equipment firm. The use of concrete will minimize maintenance costs and provide by far the longest useful life (estimated at 25 years+). It also provides much better noise absorption than the alternatives, which combined with the proposed site's location should help minimize potential noise issues.



Wheelscape design for Cottenham

source <http://www.wheelscape.co.uk/skatepark-galleries.php?g=120>

It is, therefore, recommended that suitable designs for the area are sought from the following suppliers, identified as specialists in provision of concrete parks:

Bendcrete: <http://www.bendcreteskateparks.com/>

Concreate: <http://www.concreateskateparks.co.uk/>

Freestyle: <http://freestyleskateparks.com/>

Wheelscape: <http://www.wheelscape.co.uk/>

**Summary:**

The Sports & Recreation Working Party recommends the following:

- i) That the Council agree to redevelopment of the existing MUGA site into a skate/BMX/scooter park including provision of a youth meeting area.
- ii) That the Council agree a 'hard cap' budget of £100k for the creation of the skate park, with the intention that the project be funded through a PWLB loan repayable from amounts previously set aside for youth group grants
- iii) That the Council seeks designs for a skate park from recognised specialists in concrete park design and construction, namely Bendcrete, Concreate, Freestyle and Wheelscape.

**References:**

- 1: East Cambs Open Space and Play Provision Report 2005:  
<http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Part%203.pdf>
- 2: East Cambs Play Audit 2013 (Sutton):  
<http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Summary%20of%20Play%20report%20-%20Sutton.pdf>
- 3: East Cambs Open Space and Play Provision Report 2005:  
<http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Part%203.pdf>
- 4: s106 grant application to East Cambs:  
[http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/agendas/cs090709\\_J78.pdf](http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/agendas/cs090709_J78.pdf)
- 5: E-mail from Julie Cornwell (ECDC) dated 4/11/2014 (confirmation from Emma Grima)
- 6: WREN news item about Cottenham skate park: <http://www.wren.org.uk/news/cottenham-gets-a-wheely-good-skate-park>
- 7: Public Works Loan Board borrowing rates:  
[http://www.dmo.gov.uk/index.aspx?page=PWLB/PWLB\\_Interest\\_Rates](http://www.dmo.gov.uk/index.aspx?page=PWLB/PWLB_Interest_Rates)

*Cover image courtesy Concreate Skate parks*